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Abstract

In the *Republic*, the city-soul analogy made by Plato paves the way for the entire dialogue. The main interlocutors use the analogy to show the nature of justice and aim to prove that just people live better and are happier than unjust people, by establishing a city to which justice, as defined by them, is applied. Scholars have recently been debating the validity of this analogy. Some critics assert that there are several significant structural inconsistencies and logical misconceptions, thus making the analogy fallacious; at the same time, there are proponents who write extensively in favor of this analogy and defend it against the objections raised. In this paper, I will re-examine passages in the *Republic* where the analogy first occurs, evaluate the critique made by Bernard Williams, and present arguments defending Plato' strategy. Ultimately, I will show that Plato' city-soul analogy is not as far-fetched as Williams argues and this analogy – as a crucial strategy of Plato's – is efficient and powerful enough in showing the similarities between the city and the soul, for the interlocutors to justifiably and reasonably reach the conclusion that the justice of the individual is the same as that of the city.

Introduction

At the beginning of the *Republic* II, Glaucon, in an effort to challenge Socrates, divides goods into three categories – goods for their own sake, goods for the sake of rewards only, and goods for both themselves and what comes from them – and asks Socrates, to which class justice belongs. Socrates believes that justice, "as something to be valued by anyone who is going to be blessed with happiness, both because of itself and because of what comes from it," belongs to "the finest goods," i.e. the last category, although general opinion holds that justice is onerous, burdensome, and for the sake of consequences only.[1] To defend his beliefs against the general opinions, Plato's overall strategy is to look at political justice before individual justice. His first move is to convince Glaucon to look for an analogue for justice in the individual, that is, justice in

[1] Plato, etc. *Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy: from Thales to Aristotle* (Indianapolis, US: Hackett Publishing Company, 2011), 357a-358a.

the city. But it is impossible to find a just city if we look at existing states because most of them are a mix of justice and injustice. If the justice of the city should be discussed, the city in question has to be an imagined, ideal city. At this point, he suggests constructing an ideal city, where complete goodness and justice exist.

The first city he envisages is a healthy and stable one, where citizens are ruled by their necessary appetites and all property is shared, but Glaucon considers it to be a "city of pigs." So Plato puts forward a wealthy, luxurious, and feverish city, or a city of excess.[2] In this city, unnecessary appetites result in war and other conflicts. They come from "those same desires that are most of all responsible for the bad things that happen to cities and the individuals in them."[3] Therefore, the ideal city requires a class of guardians to protect the city from enemies. However, the possibility exists that the guardians will turn on their own citizens – that "they will guard against external enemies and internal friends" – due to the former's physical strength.[4] In the *Republic III*, Plato discusses how to educate people in the guardian class so that they are fierce to people who try to trespass, but gentle with respect to citizens within the city. The education of guardians includes character building, body building, and experience building. He recommends reforming traditional Greek poetry, mythology, etc., because "what poets and prose-writers tell us about the most important matters concerning human beings is bad."[5] Children should not be told about gods having affairs and spreading chaos. Additionally, they must get a lot of physical exercise from an early age and go to battles as observers to harden themselves. When they reach the age of fifteen, they must go out as soldiers and fight for the safety of the city. At the age of fifty, "the best of the guardians," those who are selected to be rulers, need to return to be trained in dialectics, the method that gets them from making hypotheses to grasping the forms.[6] They then will be able to and have to govern the city because they owe this to society. In the *Republic II*, there are only two classes of people in the ideal city: money-loving producers and honor-loving guardians, while philosopher rulers have not been talked about at all; the division between rulers and soldiers are drawn in the *Republic V*.

This division among citizens within the city is drawn according to the function argument mentioned at the end of the *Republic I*, i.e. that excellence correlates with function. For example, a heavy knife might work well as a paperweight, but the excellence of a knife is only related to its sharpness for cutting things. As a result of this division of function, citizens are assigned to the jobs that they are most suited for. Soldiers are suited to fighting, rulers are suited to governing, and the producer class'

[2] Plato 373a, b, d.

[3] Plato 373d-e.

[4] Plato 414b.

[5] Plato 392c.

[6] Plato 412b-414b.

job is to produce all the goods needed by the city because of their excellence in making things.[7] As the function argument proceeds, within the producer class, each one of them should do the job that he is most suited for as well. Farmers' excellence correlates with their agricultural ability. Arms producers' excellence consists of their expertise in making weapons. Carpenters are excellent wood workers. In this way, producers are divided into different groups – farmers, smiths, carpenters, etc.

Nevertheless, divided into different classes, citizens might grow jealous of each other and this dangerous jealousy could make the city unstable, or even tear it apart. Producers may not be happy as they are ruled over, while guardians probably feel uncomfortable that only they have to live a frugal life. In response to this problem, Plato introduces noble lies to explain citizens' different lifestyles in order to persuade them to live in accordance with what they are suited for. "…They themselves, their weapons, and the other craftsmen's tools were at that time really being fashioned and nurtured inside the earth, and that when the work was completed, the earth, who is their mother, delivered all of them up into the world." The so-called Myth of Metals is that when each person is delivered into the world, he already has a certain metal that characterizes him.[8] People in the producer class have bronze, a lesser kind of metal, so that they are subservient. Soldiers have silver and rulers have gold. In creating noble lies, it is clear that Plato is less interested in making all individuals within the city equally happy, but securing the happiness of the city as a whole. When the three classes of citizens all perform their functions appropriately, the city as a whole is just. As the function argument concludes that justice is both necessary and sufficient for happiness,[9] this just city is then happy.

Given all the requirements of the just and completely good city, including three different classes of citizens and their different function, there must be all virtues within the city, i.e. wisdom, courage, moderation, and justice. Wisdom is the virtue of the ruler because it is "through knowledge, not ignorance, that people judge well."[10] Courage is the virtue of the soldier.[11] Moderation is the virtue of the producer.[12] Importantly, Plato claims that for the city to have all those virtues, they must exist within individuals as well.[13] Plato distinguishes three parts in the individual soul: intellect, spirit, and appetite. Spirit functions in service of either intellect or appetite, thus moving the person to act. Each of part has a form of excellence in accordance to its function as

[7] Plato 370a-b, 374a-c, 394e, 423c-d, 433a, 443b, 453b.

[8] Plato 414c-417b.

[9] Plato 354a.

[10] Plato 428b-429a.

[11] Plato 429a-430c.

[12] Plato 430e-432b.

[13] Plato 434d-435a.

well. Accordingly, wisdom is the virtue of the intellect.[14] Courage is the virtue of the spirited part because "it preserves through pains and pleasure the declarations of reason about what is to be feared and what isn't."[15] Moderation, expressed in "the friendly and harmonious relations,"[16] is the virtue of the appetite. This is where Plato ultimately comes from the justice of the city to the justice of the individual; the justice of both the city and the individual originate from each part performing its job appropriately.

Critique of the City-Soul Analogy

Williams' first critique is based on the assumption made in the construction of the ideal city, that looking at the just city could help understand justice in the individual. As Williams believes, it is implied in the *Republic* that the larger inscription will help with the smaller *only if* they present the same message. Therefore, Plato seems to presuppose that the justice of the city and that of the individual are of the same sort by applying δίκαιος [just] to both cities and human beings.[17] If it is the case that Plato derives the conclusion from predicates that have already delivered the same message, the argument of the analogy would be circular and groundless. Is Plato really begging the question Williams claims? Looking back to the passage where Plato first proposes the idea of the ideal city, what he suggests doing is to "read the larger ones first and then to examine the smaller ones, to see whether they really are the same," just like what people without keen eyesight would do.[18] He, by no means, arbitrarily determines that the city and the individual share the same kind of justice at the very beginning. It is clear that Plato does not fail to recognize "the fundamental distinction between the two, which is that while the city is visible, the soul is invisible."[19] Instead, his strategy is to start with hypotheses and later come back to examine whether these hypotheses are true. "That city and soul are similar is put forward as a hypothesis, as a supposition that must be put to the test."[20] Later, Plato does provide a right kind of solution to the possibility that the justice of the individual is found to be different from that of the city. According to him, if any difference between the justice of the city and the soul is found, "then we must go back and test that on the city. And if we do this, and compare them side by side, we might well light up as if we were rubbing fire-sticks together."[21] For Plato, to develop this analogy is a process of moving back and forth between the city and the

[14] Plato 442c.

[15] Plato 442b-c.

[16] Plato 442c-d.

[17] Williams, Bernard, "The Analogy of City and Soul in Plato's Republic," *In The Sense of the Past: Essays in the History of Philosophy* (Princeton University Press, 2006): 108.

[18] Plato 368d.

[19] Blössner, Norbert, "The City-Soul Analogy" (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 346.

[20] Blössner 347.

[21] Plato 434e.

individual until an agreement on the nature and effects of justice is reached, rather than an unscrutinized statement. Williams' second move is to examine two other principles, *the analogy of meaning* and *the whole-part rule. The analogy of meaning* indicates that the explanation of a city's being F is the same as that of a man's being F, namely that the same εἶδος [character] of F-ness applies to both.[22] *The whole-part rule* is that "*x* is *F* if and only if *x* has constituent parts which are F," where *x* stands for any object that is in question and *F* stands for the quality ascribed to the object.[23] If *the whole-part rule* is not interpreted correctly, then from this rule alone, a type of ridiculous absurdity emerges. Statements such as – "a city is large only if its citizens are large" – which is nonsensical, could be easily derived from this rule. Plato solves this problem by placing some restrictions upon domains of *x* and *F*. In terms of *F*, Plato puts forward three examples: spiritedness, the love of learning, and the love of money, which are the characteristics he attributes to Thracians, Athenians, and Egyptians respectively.[24] These characteristics do follow *the whole-part rule.* Yet Plato does not want to extend the realm of *F* too far. Williams also agrees that it is not Plato's intention that "every term which can be applied to both cities and men obeys the rule of 435E."[25] Further, some other scholars even push further to claim that "the similarity in question relates to one attribute, and one alone: that of being just."[26] *The whole-part rule* itself is indeed a little far-fetched, but given that Plato provides three distinct examples explicitly, it is more reasonable to believe that there should be a distinction between qualities that satisfy the requirements of being *F* and those that do not. Since the qualities of the city in discussion spring from the qualities of individual souls, it is at least clear that *F* should first and foremost be applicable to individuals. Other qualities, such as size, come from the aggregation of individuals, so they are not taken into account. In addition, as Williams believes, the two rules together would result in infinite regress if the same character of a larger object is infinitely referred to that of its smaller parts. Similarly, this problem is resolved by confining the realm of *x*. From Plato's arguments, all that could be established with certainty is that, when *x* refers to the city and the constituent parts of *x* refer to men, this rule holds. However, the rule does not necessarily stand when *x* is identified as the individual, the soul, or any other smaller part. No more regress is legitimate. Justifiably, *the whole-part rule* in the city-soul analogy is free of the infinite regress charge that Williams' posits.

After identifying and solving the logical fallacies with sufficient reasoning, as mentioned, Williams then modifies *the whole-part rule* into *the predominant section rule* – namely that "A city is F if and only if the leading, most influential, or

[22] Plato 435a-b.
[23] Williams 109.
[24] Plato 435e.
[25] Williams 109.
[26] Blössner 346.

predominant citizens are F"[27] – and the two rules together, *the whole-part rule* and *the predominant section rule*, are two different versions of *the derivation principle*.[28] Ferrari does not agree that Plato's analogy is based upon either version of *the derivation principle*, because they both imply a causal or constitutive relationship between the justice of the city and that of the individual. However, as Ferrari contends, this connection is merely an analogical one. Additionally, the newly-proposed rule brings a new problem for Williams. He sees the tension between this rule and Plato's definition of justice. If justice is defined as having each part of the whole performing its own function, according to Plato, a just city must have its three classes of men, with three different functions, doing their own jobs properly. Some of them, such as the rulers, live by intellect, while others, soldiers and producers, are characterized by either courage or moderation. But if following Williams' *predominant section rule*, all citizens, no matter what their functions are, have to be dominated by intellect to appropriately perform their jobs, because intellect must rule in a just object. It is clear that these two conditions conflict with each other as for soldiers and producers, because they could not be dominated by intellect to perform their proper functions and be dominated by courage and moderation to be excellent in their jobs at the same time; the word "dominance" indicates that there is only one outstanding characteristic. Or else, if every individual soul is dominated by intellect only, the most suitable job for every single person within the city would be to rule over others. It would be ridiculous for the city to become a community where there are only rulers. Over whom would they rule?

Nevertheless, there is one possible solution to this paradox. The proper picture could be that in a just city, all citizens have a *sufficient* amount of intellect to ensure the proper functioning of their jobs, but not all of them are *dominated* by intellect. Only in rulers does intellect play a dominant rule. Producers have relatively less intellect but more moderation because their excellence is correlated to moderation instead of intellect. Similarly, soldiers have lower amount of intellect than rulers to make room for more courage. This solution is not incompatible with the interpretation that "some minimal exercise of λογιστικός [intellect] would seem to be involved in bringing it about that each man sticks to his own business."[29] Rather, in this way, the major characteristic of a producer is still moderation, and a soldier courage. The co-existence of a minimal sufficient sum of intellect and other characteristics correlated to different functions within citizens other than rulers is possible. When Plato discusses moderation, for example, he states that "in the soul of that very person, there is a better part and a worse one."[30] He uses comparatives, "better" and "worse," in terms of individuals' ability to control themselves, which is the function of the intellect. Apparently, Plato suggests that the amount of intellect in different individuals are not the same.

[27] Williams 112.

[28] Ferrari, G. R. F., "Williams and the City-Soul Analogy," *Ancient Philosophy* 29 (2009): 407.

[29] Williams 110.

[30] Plato 431a.

Objectors might still not be convinced by this explanation because they think a minimal exercise of λογιστικός [intellect] is not enough for the individual to be just. There is another possible solution, that is, when establishing the just city, Plato does not imply that every single individual in this city is necessarily just in the same sense. To have a just city is not the same as to have all citizens within the city being just. At this stage, all that Plato cares about is the justice of the city, but not the justice of its constituent parts, namely individuals. For instance, when he introduces the Myth of the Metals, his intention is to establish the justice and happiness of the city, but not the happiness of every single person within the city. The city functions well by having each part doing its own job in the best way possible, so happiness of the individual should not and could not be ensured. After all, justice is considered to be a different sort of virtue from moderation, courage, and intellect; only when the latter three categories are put together will justice ensue. Therefore, that all three classes of citizens perform their functions appropriately is the necessary and sufficient condition for the city as a whole to be just. Additionally, Williams' emendation of the analogy implies that the two inferior classes of citizens ought to be ruled together by the philosopher-king in the ideal city. However, this assumption has to be examined as well. Having seen the vision of the Good after being educated for a long time, it is possible that the philosopher-king, as a totally self-sufficient and just individual, will be reluctant to go back to the city and rule. Their return to fulfill social responsibilities could only be because they "regard the task not as a good thing, but a necessity."[31] There needs to be a more convincing solution to Plato's philosopher-king paradox in order to justify that it is out of the question for philosopher-king to rule over the city, given that he does not necessarily need to perform the ruling function to get more justice in return for himself.

Many other critics have relentlessly argued against the legitimacy of this analogy. For example, some claim that the statement that the individual has the same number of parts as the city does is less legitimate; "just because the justice of X consists in X's having parts that do their own, the conclusion does not follow that if A and B are just, each must have as many parts as the other, and the same kinds of parts."[32] Instead of being divided into three distinct parts, the individual soul could be just simply by "doing his own" as a whole, "while the justice of the civic community consists in the fact that all of the members of that community are doing their own."[33] He also refers back to human psychology depicted, based on Plato's account, in early Greek epics and lyrics, which "do not, however, lead to a threefold division of the soul."[34] Nevertheless, later scholars should always bear in mind that this analogy is first and foremost in service of Plato's argument for manifestation of the definition of justice. Therefore, as a strategy to show

[31] Plato 540b.

[32] Blössner 349.

[33] Blössner 349.

[34] Blössner 356.

what the nature of justice is in the individual, the analogy is quite efficient and no more so-called legitimacy is required beyond that. "The isomorphism as a manifestation of internalization and externalization, it seems we can use the 'analogy' to form a clearer idea of how Plato understood psychological structure."[35] The underlying argument that the establishment of the ideal city is in purpose to "subordinate to the ethical goal of consideration of the individual" should always be regarded as a foundational predicate throughout the entire dialogue.[36] Additionally, in the process of "rubbing fire-sticks together,"[37] as Plato described, it is more likely that Plato divides the city into three classes in accordance with three parts of the individual, but not the other way around, as he explicitly maintains that he will revise the argument of analogy if it fails to match a similarity.[38] The same arguments could be used to defend Plato's strategy against any critique that lingers in details in the analogy and use them as evidence against the similarity between the city and the individual.

Conclusion

The city-soul analogy in the *Republic* is a fundamental argument upon which Plato builds the rest of his work. Because the justice of the city is much clearer and more obvious than that of the individual, Plato's strategy is to look at political justice first and, moving back and forth, bridges it with the justice of the individual until an agreement of the nature of justice is derived from the analogy. There have been plenty of discussions on the validity of this analogy. Bernard Williams believes that Plato has assumed the similarity between the justice of the city and the individual, which is also the conclusion that he wants to derive from the analogy. If Williams' objection stands, the entire argument Plato makes would be merely begging the question. However, Williams fails to realize that Plato explicitly says that the similarity he is interested in is only hypothetical and he will turn back to re-examine and adjust the analogy. Then, in terms of *the whole-part rule*, Williams argues that the analogy between the city and the individual results in endless regression. Again, he fails to notice that Plato does not want to extend *the whole-part rule* to any smaller part than the individual. Additionally, Plato does not imply that any quality of the city is applicable to the individual. By putting forward *the predominant section rule,* Williams then wants to claim that there is an intrinsic conflict between individuals' doing their proper jobs and being ruled by the intellect within them, while this dominance of the intellect is a necessary condition for the justice of the individual. However, when justice of the city as a whole is looked at, there is no need to demand that every citizen have the same type of justice. Again, Williams' critique is less convincing. On the other hand, for someone to perform his

[35] Lear, Jonathan, "Inside and Outside Republic," *Open Minded: Working Out the Logic of the Soul* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998): 197.

[36] Blössner 346.

[37] Plato 434e.

[38] Plato 434e-435a.

function appropriately, only a minimal amount of intellect is required. All in all, this analogy serves well as a strategy to seek the definition of the justice of the individual.

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